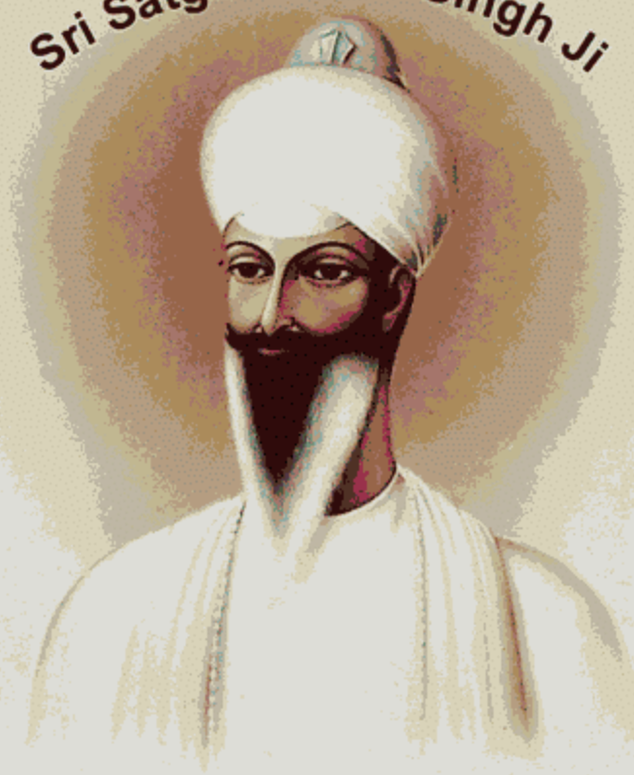
Pioneer of the 'Non-cooperation and *Swadeshi* Movement'

Baisakhi, 1914 Bikrmi

Boycott of the British Courts
Establishment of the *Panchayats*

Boycott of the British Govt. Schools
Educating children in the local
Sikh *Daramshalas*

Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji



Boycott of the British Post & Telegraph services
Establishment of the '*Kuka* Postal Service'

April 12, 1857 A.D.

Boycott of the British foreign products
Popularising of '*Swadeshi*'--
indigenous Indian goods

Boycott of the British Govt. Railways
Adoption of indigenously-
created means of transport

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MAKING ENDEAVOUR FOR THE GLORY OF THE *KHALSA* IN THE PUNJAB

'Satgur Nanak pargatya miti dhundh jag channan hoya'. Sri Guru Nanak Dev appeared on this earth as a source of light to dispel from this world the darkness of vices like dishonesty, deceit, greediness, self-centeredness and superstitions. He spread the sacred message of *'Ghaal khaye kichh hathaun deiy Nanak rah pachhaneiy seiy'*. The creation of *Sikh Panth* was based on chanting of Almighty`s Name, earning through hard toil and sharing one's earnings with others. Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the Tenth Master, created the *Khalsa Panth* by making Sikhs the *Singhs* (lions) through a distinctive transformation. The objective of creating the *Khalsa* was -- *Na chhadoon kahoon dusht asuran nisani // challai sabh jagat main dharma ki kahani //* . The *Khalsa Raj* had come into being in consequence of countless sacrifices made during a struggle drawn-out over a century. However, during this Raj, the Sikhs had abandoned their pious 'code of conduct' and took to intoxicants and other vices. With this moral degradation, they were ultimately deprived of their *Khalsa Raj*, enslaved and placed under the British Rule.

It was a time when Sikhism was disappearing from the scene of the Punjab and the evils like intoxication, carnivorous food habits, killing of female-foetus, selling of daughters, exchanging of women etc. were becoming rampant among them. The time for ripening of such prophecies of Guru Nanak had arrived : *bachan pal nahin sakangey, bahut khaanghey gham* and *main pher karunga khalsa, vasey vich Punjab*. In the 19th Century, Satguru Ram Singh Ji appeared on the scene as a spring to rejuvenate the autumn-affected garden called *Sikhism*. He re-created the *Khalsa* as *'Sant Khalsa'* by baptizing (sanctifying) five Sikhs at Sri Bhaini Sahib on the day of *Baisakhi* in 1914 *Bikrmi* (April, 1857). Bhai Rai Singh was sent to Sri Hazoor Sahib to bring the 'code of conduct' for the Sikhs (as was laid-down by the Tenth Master) which was soon popularized among the *Sant Khalsa*. They were forbidden from the use of intoxicants and liberated from the prevailing social evils and superstitions. They were told that **killing of a girl was a bigger sin than that of killing a cow**. To remove any gender bias, women too were baptized together with men. To invigorate the spread of Sikhism, *pothis* (small books) of the holy Sikh scriptures were got prepared. To begin with, Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji got copies of the *Adi Granth* printed from a lithographic printing press at Lahore. People were told to learn *Gurbani* by heart through routine daily chanting. Sikhs were connected with *Gurbani*, *Gurmukhi* script, *Gurmukhi* attire and Punjabi language. Giani Gian Singh in his '*Panth Prakash*' describes about the *Namdhari* Sikhs in the following couplets :

Clad in immaculate white clothes , round white turban and flowing beard
They (Kukas) perform 'Havan' and recite the Guru Granth
They are the true followers of the Tenth Master and, hence,
Ardently desire to re-capture their lost power and empire
As heard of them, I, Gian Singh, have seen these qualities in them
Such unique and famous are the Kuka Sikhs.

A large number of *Namdhari* Sikhs were martyred by cannon fires and hanging, on the charges of committing armed-mutiny against the British Rule in 1871-72. Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji was exiled and deported to British Burma (now, Myanmar). After his banishment to Burma in January 1872 A.D., a permanent police post was set-up at Bhaini Sahib. Restrictions were imposed even on chanting of *Gurbani*, conducting of *Path* and holding congregational meetings by the *Namdhari* Sikhs. In those difficult times, Satguru Hari Singh Ji nurtured the cause of Sikhism and endeavored to keep the flame of National Freedom Struggle on. For this so-called 'offence' of performing *Akhand Paths*, the *Namdhari* Sikhs were awarded seven years imprisonment and many of them were fined. Several Sikhs breathed their last in the jails.

Till now, in the *Namdhari* Panth, one lakh twenty five thousand *Sadharan Paths* (holy recitations) have been accomplished five times and *Akhand Paths* (uninterrupted recitations) have been performed thousands of times. Under the able leadership of Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji, the present Namdhari Head, these Sikhs, have attained a creditable place in various activities such as *Gurmat Sangeet* (the Sikh religious music), classical music, literature, sports, horticulture, etc. in addition to preserving the Sikh way of life, simplicity and *Gurmat Maryada* (human conduct as per the *Guru*'s dictates).

GUIDING THE NATION FOR ACHIEVING TOTAL INDEPENDENCE

Satguru Ram Singh Ji is recognized as the most unique person who led the way in offering the key-*mantra* for a complete independence of man. While serving in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, he witnessed the rise and fall of the Sikh Empire. After quitting the Sikh Army in 1846, he returned to Sri Bhaini Sahib and carried an in-depth study of the state of affairs prevailing in the country. He pondered over how the British came to India as traders and then exploited the weaknesses of Indians to ultimately become rulers of the whole country. To give his ideas practical shape, Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji launched a unique struggle for the country's freedom on April 12, 1857 A.D. This struggle laid credence to an innovative viewpoint for forming a healthy and enlightened society based on the philosophy of Guru Nanak, and made efforts for creating a sound social order with political awareness. He was the first policy-maker who offered our country a strong and powerful weapon of 'disobedience' and 'boycott'. His style of work has been explained in the Encyclopedia Britannica as: **"Guru Ram Singh, the Sikh Philosopher and Reformer, is the first Indian to use non-cooperation and boycott with reference to British trade and employment, as political weapon".**

The political struggle started by him was also multifaceted. *Kuka Movement* was unique in many ways:

* Complete boycott of foreign products and popularizing the indigenous produce
* Popularized clothing made from handmade fabric on handlooms
* Total boycott of foreign courts
* Strict ban on the use of railways, roads, canals and post offices
* Declining to accept the British employment

In addition to this, to create a suitable situation for attaining self-governance, a parallel government was established wherein:

* Punjab was divided into different *Subas* (provinces) and to extend the concept of self-governance, 22 *subas* (provincial heads) were deputed

* *Subas* were given responsibility to settle the social feuds

* A secret postal system was set up. In government circles, it was known as 'Kuka Postal Service'

* A 'Kuka Platoon' was raised and established in Kashmir under the command of Hira Singh Sadhoria

* Political linkages were forged and established with Nepal, Afghanistan and Russia to gain support for the ongoing freedom-struggle

It was for the first time that the British came across such a unique and formidable type of power that was not directed by any state or empire equipped with strong weaponry and military hardware commanded by a General or an Emperor, but was run by a divine celebrity that was in complete harmony with the code of conduct standardized over the Sikh history of 400 years having been shaped and improvised by the great philosophy of Sikh Gurus and the people connected with this power were not the on-pay-roll-soldiers but an ocean of common men volunteering to make unparallel sacrifices for a cause.

This unified and magnitudinal public force launched an open and unbridled mutinous revolt against the foreign rulers and badly perplexed the British Indian Government. There were a series of martyrdom and massacres which have been briefly listed here:

* February 1869: revolt against the British at Thrajwala

* June 14, 1871: Action pertaining to the opening of a slaughter-house near Harimandar Sahib (Golden Temple) at Amritsar

* July 15, 1871: Attack on slaughter-house at Raikot

* August 15, 1871: Hanging in public of Gurmukh Singh, Mangal Singh, and Mastan Singh in connection with a case at Raikot

* September 15, 1871: Hanging in public of Hakam Singh, Fateh Singh, Beehla Singh, and Lehna Singh from a banyan tree in Ram Bagh in connection with a slaughter-house case at Amritsar. In the same case, Jhanda Singh was also hanged after a year.

* November 26, 1871: Hanging in public of Giani Rattan Singh and Sant Rattan Singh from a banyan tree in front of the Central Jail at Ludhiana

* January 13, 1872: A martyrs' cluster (Shaheedi Jatha) left Sri Bhaini Sahib for Malerkotla

* January 14, 1872: A combat with Sardar Badan Singh of *Malaud* in which two Sikhs namely, Sardar Nand Singh and Sardar Attar Singh, were killed and four others were injured

* January 15, 1872: Assault by a group of Namdhari Sikhs at Malerkotla where eight of them laid down their lives in the battle with the State Police of Malerkotla

* January 16, 1872: Surrender by 66 Namdhari Sikhs and two women at the Sherpur Police Station

* January 17, 1872: Mr. L. Cowan, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana, hurriedly conducted an unwarranted and illegal act of summary executions on an open ground at Jamalpur near Malerkotla in which he blew-off as many as 49 Kuka Sikhs using the cannons brought from Patiala State. A twelve-years child named Bishen Singh, who attacked Mr. Cowan, was massacred with a sword by a Patiala Police sepoy.

* January 18, 1872: With the arrival of Mr. Forsyth, Commissioner Ambala Division, at Malerkotla, a fictitious trial to kill the remaining 16 Namdhari Sikh rebels was held and they were executed with the cannon-fires. The two women prisoners were handed over to the Patiala State Police.

* January 16-17-18, 1872: Mr. L.Cowan, the then Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana, called Satguru Ram Singh Ji to Malaud on January 16, 1872 wherefrom Satguru Ji went to the village Siaarh and spent the afternoon and evening at the *Havelli* of S. Bela Singh Namdhari. At the time when his Sikhs were being blown-off at Malerkotla, Sri Satguru Ji heard the sound of the cannons being fired and expressed his contentment that his followers were bravely laying down their lives with honour and in line with the rich Sikh tradition of martyrdom. Sri Satguru Ji reached Sri Bhaini Sahib after the sunset. A police force had reached there in compliance of the orders of Mr. Forsyth, Commissioner Ambala. Satguru Ji, together with some of his close assciates, reached Ludhiana on a bullock-cart. As had transpired in a long dialogue with Commissioner Forsyth, he was taken by a special train, to Allahabad under watchfulness of the 12 Gurkha Platoon commanded by Mr Jackson.

* January 19, 1872: With the sole intention of finding-out 'hidden' weapons, a thorough search of the Namdari Headquarters at Sri Bhaini Sahib was conducted by digging the place upto water-dampness level. A police-post immideately set up at the place continued for 51 years. Satguru Pratap Singh Ji and Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji were born in the same detention centre.

* January 23, 1872: Restrictions were imposed even on congregating, chanting of *Path* and holding of *Diwan* meetings by the Namdhari Sikhs. Gathering of five *Kukas* was declared unlawful and the entire Namdhari community was branded as 'criminal'.

* March 16, 1872: From Allahabad, Satguru Ram Singh Ji was moved to Burma, via Calcutta, to be detained in the Central Jail at Rangoon (now, *Yagoon*)

* September 16, 1872: At Rangoon, Satguru Ji was shifted to a bungalow constructed in military area where Bahadur Shah Zaffar, the last Moghul Emperor of Delhi, was also earlier confined.

The *Subas* deputed by Sri Satguru Ji were also deemed 'as dangerous as their leader' by the British. Three *Subas* were confined in the *Asirgarh* Fort, two in *Chunar* Fort, three in *Moulmeen* while *Suba* Kahan Singh and Sahib Singh were exiled in Aden. Satguru Hari Singh Ji endeavoured to keep the flame of freedom-struggle on. In addition to making efforts to spread the cause of Sikhism, he maintained contacts abroad and sent scores of Namdhari Sikhs to Rangoon and later to Margui in order to fetch Satguru Ram Singh's Hukanamas (letter-edicts)

Satguru Partap Singh Ji performed a key-role in getting the Sikh Marriage Act passed in 1909 through the Maharaja of Nabha. A mammoth Martyrs' Conference was organized at Muthdda Kalan in 1921 A.D. Full support was rendered for approval of the 'Resolution For Total Independence' at the Congress Session of Lahore in 1929 A.D. *Guru Nanak Naamleva Sarab Sampardai* Conference was organized in 1934 to unite the entire followers of Guru Nanak. At His Holiness's request Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had participated in the State Peoples' Conference at Ludhiana in 1939 A.D. A Hindu-Sikh Milap Conference was also held in 1943 at Sri Bhaini Sahib.

At the time of partition of the country in 1947, Satguru Pratap Singh Ji made all-out efforts to protect the Sikhs from atrocities meted-out to them in the widespread riots and inferno. The people migrating to India as refugees were rehabilitated and the homeless ones were provided shelter, food and help. With his special efforts, the *caravans* of migrating Muslims to Pakistan were offered food and water from the *langar* (community-kitchen) and there was not even a single instance of loss of men or material of Muslim migrants at the hands of the Namdhari Sikhs.

After his coronation as the *Namdhari Guru* in 1959, Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji made efforts for the overall development of the Namdhari society and made fruitful endeavours for the establishment of global peace. He organized peace-conferences and offered full and unconditional support to the like-minded organizations. He strived for safeguarding the rights of others while making a resolve to bequeath self rights.He emphasized on embracing the Indian culture and made efforts for its propagation. In 1981, in a function held at Vigyan Bhawan, Sri Satguru Ji had remarked that if we fully adopt our Indian culture, India will not only be a developing country but also a front-runner nation to provide leadership to the entire world.

Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna,the President of the *Gadar Party Movement*, had said these words: "At present, our independence is partial. The actual freedom was envisioned by Satguru Ram Singh Ji that had made us reasonable and free from greed driving out all falsehood. So long as we do not adopt his principles, our independence shall remain incomplete and unfruitful."

If publicity of the freedom-struggle of India is to be made at the government level, it must be categorically emphasized that the foundation of India's freedom-struggle was laid by Baba Ram Singh Ji. He dared to face the British Government even long before the Congress was not yet born. He waged a nonviolent and thorough war for national freedom. He started a disobedience movement boycotting government-run post offices, railways, other British administrative centers and suspending purchase of foreign products. The movement of self-governance was also patronized by Baba Ram Singh Ji himself and he was the first political leader to be sent on exile. Had there been no 'insularity' prevailing in the country, he would have been worshiped as 'Father of the Nation'.

-- Gurdwara Gazette, June 1912

I see in the earlier papers that (Guru) Ram Singh was looked upon as a successor or actual embodiment of Guru Nanak, the saint. He is now the representative of Guru Govind, the warrior.

-- J.W. Macnabb
Commissioner of Ambala
04.11.1871

They (Namdharis) inculcate a very strict morality, condemning most strongly lying, theft and adultery and appear envious merely to revive the Sikh Religion in its original state of purity and to erdicate the errors which have, from time to time, defiled it.

-- Inspector General of Police
20.01.1868

During the World War in 1914, the British Government tried to appease the *Kukas* by land-grants and through some other means, but failed and had to use a tyrant's rod.

-- G.S. Chhabra
The History of Modern India

Guru Ram Singh has no pretension to be the saintly *Fakir*. He visits you attended by half a dozen horsemen; he is followed by scores of men on foot; he comes into your room surrounded by a Court like a prince. He and his people are dressed in exquisitely fine white clothes.

-- J.W. Macnabb
Commissioner of Ambala
04.11.1871

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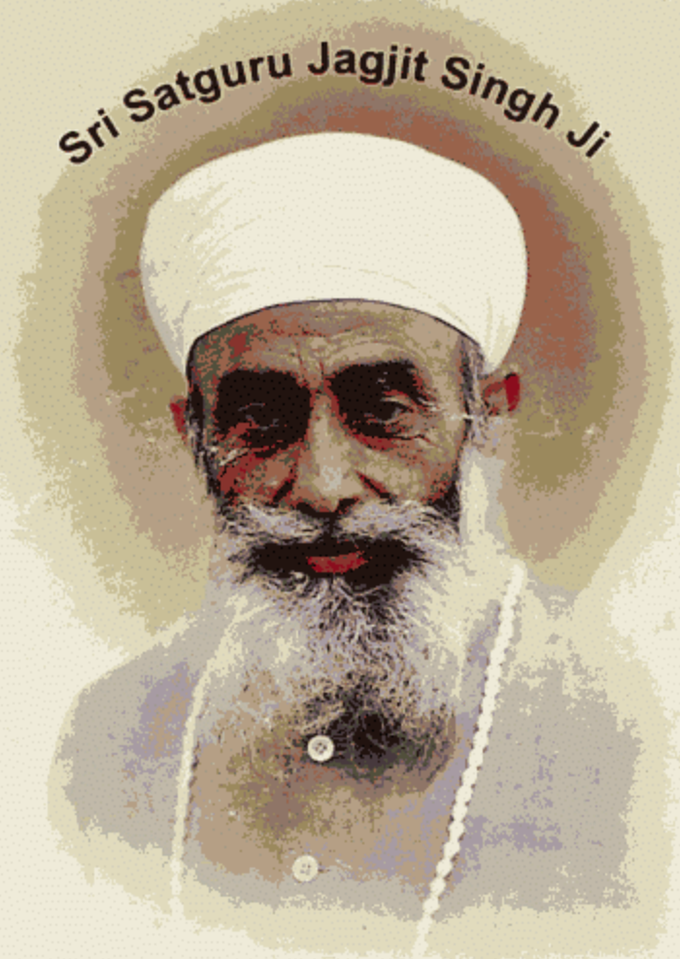
Preserver-Propagator of Indian Culture, Sikh Form,Tenets & *Gurmat Sangeet*



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